

AN EXTRAMURAL SEMINAR

ON

"FARMERS' SUICIDE IN THE
CHANGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC
SCENARIO"

RESOURCE PERSON

DR. MATHURI CHARAN NAYAK
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on

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
PATTAMUNDAI COLLEGE,
PATTAMUNDAI

REPORT

An Extramural seminar was organised by the Department of Sociology, Pattamundai College, Pattamundai on Dt.12.02.2019 on the topic "**FARMERS SUICIDE IN THE CHANGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCENARIO**". The resource person of the seminar was Dr. Mathuri Charan Nayak, Reader in Sociology, Tulasi Women's College, Kendrapara. Prof. Ramesh Chandra Sahoo, Principal of the college chaired the meeting. Lt. Manoj Parida, Head of the Department gave a key note address of the topic and welcomed the guest on the dais and the participants. Most of the students of Sociology Honours were present in the seminar. The meeting was ended with a vote of thanks by Mr. Ranjit Keshari Senapati, Lecturer in Sociology.

FARMER'S SUICIDE IN THE CHANGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCENARIO

By Dr. Mathuri Charan Nayak

At the outset I should express my thankfulness to the Principal Sir, Adhikari Sir, Manoj and Ranjit for providing me this opportunity to discuss on a topic which is socially, economically and politically sensitive. When the season of farmer's suicide starts, a non-farmer becomes farmer when he commits suicide and the plight of a real farmer remains unnoticed. In this paper an attempt has been made to discuss the broad outlines on farmer's suicide in India in the context of the changing socio-economic scenario based on the findings of different researchers who have pursued their study in this direction in different parts of India. My discussion here, may not be enough to answer all the questions on this emotive topic but it will serve as a framework to find answers for future queries.

Here I have divided my discussion into three parts. In the first part I will attempt to outline the Durkheimian theory of suicide; in the second part I will try to discuss the present socio economic scenario in the context of neo-liberalization and in the last part an attempt will be made to put farmer's suicide in India in the Durkheimian framework.

In social science, the concept of suicide is debated across disciplines it has drawn the attention of psychologist, philosophers and sociologist. Emile Durkheim, a classical sociologist of 18th century has made the concept of suicide more complex. He has emphasize upon three types of suicide associated with three different conditions of society: altruistic, egoistic and anomic. Altruistic suicide is a feature of primitive society where mechanical solidarity – a solidarity of resemblance – predominates. Here, individuality is merged with collectivity. In this situation, suicide is treated as culturally virtuous act – the case of Sati, the act of self immolation by a widow.

The other type of suicide is egoistic suicide which happens in the modern industrial society- a society characterized by organic solidarity – solidarity of differentiation where division of labour prevails. Here because of individualization, there is loosening or dilution of traditional social ties binding the members of a group to one another. The degree of individualization varies in relation to the domestic environment. The larger the size of the family the greater the degree of protection against suicide. Members of small family such as widow, issueless or divorcee are more prone to commit suicide than others.

The third type of suicide is anomic. It occurs as a result of the estrangement of the self from the community. Durkheim believes that normative boundaries control the upper and lower limits of aspirations of its members and an anomic situation arises when these boundaries go haywire. This situation generates feelings of failure and disappointment which leads to the growth of suicidogenic tendency. Durkheim views anomic as the product of a modern socio-economic system –this is, capitalism. Penetration of capitalism to the process of globalization and liberalization increases the vulnerability of people to suicidogenic tendency. He considers such suicides as the characteristics feature of industrial society. This, what Durkheim considers the negative impact of industrialization on the organic solidarity. Increasing socialization at work in the industrial society is positively related to declining happiness. That means, in the primitive society people were more happier than the people in industrial society.

PART-II

Now, we should focus on the changes the Indian society has gone through after the outbreak of neo-liberalism . The year 1991 is a watershed in the history of Indian policy making and planning. Since this year the Govt. of India has been pursuing the policies of liberalization and globalization with structural adjustment programmes to rescue the sagging economy and avoid the balance of payment crisis. The response of the economy to these reform measures was positive and encouraging in terms of rise in growth rate , increase in foreign exchange and inflow of FDI by MNCs. In the name of structural adjustment , the Government of India initiated the process of desubsidization from fertilizer , pesticides , electricity, petrol, diesel and other agricultural inputs which multiplied the cost of agriculture. At the same time the cost of agricultural produce did not rise in the same proportion. Thus affected the farm sector as a whole.

After independence the Government of India land before measures. The surplus land of higher caste people were distributed among the landless lower caste people. The people of higher caste in order to compensate their loss diversified their income . They engaged themselves in other profitable occupations such as trade and business . As result , the withdrawal of subsidy didn't affects the higher caste people so much as the lower caste farmers.

In order to evaluate the impact of agricultural distress, farmers who committed suicide were differentiated into three categories- small, medium and large cultivators- on the basis of the amount of land owned. Largest numbers of farmers belong to small category (64 percent) medium and large producers account for lower figures (23 and 14 percent respectively). Most small farmers (86 percent) derived major portion of their income from the combination of subsistence cultivation and the scale of their labour power to others whereas the income of 78 percent of large farmers and 60 percent of medium ones was obtained from trade. I have derived this data from a study conducted by Prof. B.B. Mohanty in the two districts of Maharashtra : Amravati and Yavatmal Indian.

Indian agriculture mostly depends upon seasonal rain . Small producers are totally dependent on agriculture. They are more affected by irregular rainfall. But the medium and large farmers are cushioned against this by the income generated by the non-agricultural sources.

Death, Debt and Agrarian distress:

Access to credit to a large extent has bearing on the farmers suicide . Large farmers borrow from formal lending agencies (cooperatives banks , states) while small holders depend on informal sources for credit (money lenders , traders , better off proprietors) mortgaging their lands or jewellery . It should not be avoided that loss of collateral because of nonpayment of loans was an important factor in the suicide of such farmers. It is observed that crop failure and indebtedness are the principal reasons of suicide for small farmers whereas for medium and large farmers along with crop failure and indebtedness , family disputes , oldage , illness business losses anre compelling factors of suicide.

Use of HYV seeds and technology:

MNCs introduced HYV (High Yield Variety) seeds and fertilizer and pesticides . Higher castes medium and large farmers because of their education could use HYV seeds and technology successfully in their field. But low caste small farmers used them unsuccessfully which affected their productivity.

PART-III

Low and medium caste farmers are generally small land holders . they aspire to improve their socio-economic position as a result of land reform programmes and planned agriculture. Their aspiration was multiplied by the different social movement piloted by Ambedkar and others. The majority of those committed suicide were small farmers who had been adversely affected during the early 1990s. Similar processes are evident elsewhere. In the UK , for example , the rising incidence of suicide among farmers and agricultural workers has been linked to the process of economic liberalization that began in the 1980s. More recently , China has witnessed an analogous phenomenon , but with a different victim.

Mahesh Chandra Singh

Members presented in the Seminar on 12.02.2019

Mahesh Chandra Nayak
Signature of Resource Person :-

1. Duchasa Banerji, HOD, Chemistry
2. Pooja Panda H.O.D. Sociology
3. Rishi Kanti Das, Lect. in sociology
4. Pratiksha Jena - BA-18-264
5. Madhusmita Tural - BA-18-95
6. Manaswini Swain - BA-18-67
7. Namita Padhi - BA-18-288
8. Muni Meitry - BA-18-115
9. Aparna Das - BA-18-75
- 10 - Krishna Priya Parida BA-16-247
- 11 - Priyanka Sethi BA-16-066
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- 13 - Sanjukta Behura BA-16-004
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30. Ashree Panda BA 17-027
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32. Soumya Sephalika Nayak BA 17-021
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42. Sitala Sweni Mohanty BA-16-34
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- Manasi Das BA-16-072
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- Sarita Sahoo 40
- Rajeswari Nayak - 74
- Tyofhnarani Behera - 266
- Subhasmita Panda - BA-16-044
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- Surjasmita Sethy BA-16-192
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